**Narcissus and Echo**

Echo was a beautiful nymph. She had a love for the woods and hills and especially of woodland sports. Despite her beauty and playful nature, Echo had one little flaw... she was always talking. Talk, talk, talk. Whether she was just chatting or staging an argument, she always made certain to have the last word.

One day, Hera was seeking her husband, Zeus, who she suspected was out in the woods, flirting and partying with the nymphs again, which had always bothered her. Echo, with her fast tongue, distracted Hera with stories and kept the goddess occupied until the nymphs made their escape. When Hera saw what was going on, she was furious at being fooled, and punished the talkative Echo by taking away her ability to speak first. Echo could now only speak the same words spoken to her. (Thus the word “echo.”)  
  
Then one day came when Echo saw Narcissus, a beautiful Greek youth, as he was hunting in the mountains. She fell in love with him immediately, and followed close wherever he went. Echo wished she could speak to him and get him to talk to her, but it was not in her power. She waited with impatience for him to speak first. Of course Echo was more than ready to reply!

One day the youth, being separated from his friends, heard something nearby. He asked, “Who’s there?” and Echo replied by asking the same question, “who’s there?” Narcissus looked around, but saw no one. He then asked the voice, “Come out!” Echo answered back with the same words. Still no figure behind this voice. Narcissus then asked, “Why are you ignoring me?” Echo asked the same question. Narcissus then asked the voice, “Come join me!” Echo answered with all her heart in the same words, and ran to him, ready to throw her arms around his neck. Narcissus then backed away, yelling at Echo to stay away from him and completely insulting poor Echo. Echo was completely devastated.

Narcissus left her, and Echo went to hide, embarrassed, in the recesses of the woods. From that time on, she lived in caves and among mountain cliffs. Her form faded with sadness until the point where all her flesh melted away. Her bones were changed into rocks and there was nothing left of her but her voice. With that she is still ready to reply to anyone who calls her, and she keeps up her old habit of having the last word. So when you call out on a mountain range, Echo will always call back.  
  
Now back to Narcissus. His cruelty in this case was not the first time he shunned away a nymph. He shunned all the rest of the nymphs in just the same way as he had done to sweet Echo. One day a maiden who had attempted to attract him only to fail, prayed that he might someday feel what it was like to love someone and receive no return of affection. The goddess Artemis heard her prayer, and granted her wish.   
  
There was once a sacred fountain, with the clearest water, where the shepherds never drove their flocks, where the mountain goats dared not sleep, and where no beast of the forests ever approached. Not even a single leaf or branch fell on to it; but the grass grew beautifully all around it, and the rocks sheltered it from the sun. One day, Narcissus, fatigued from his day of hunting, stooped down to drink and saw his own image in the water. He thought it was some beautiful spirit living in the fountain.

He stood gazing with admiration at those bright eyes, that hair curled like the hair of a great god, those rounded cheeks, that ivory neck, those parted lips, and the glow of health and great shape overall. He fell in love with himself. He brought his lips near to give this image a kiss; he plunged his arms in to embrace his newly beloved vision. It fled at the touch, but returned again after the water settled and renewed his fascination. He could not tear himself away; he couldn’t think of food or rest, only of the vision.

He spoke to the supposed spirit asking why this beautiful image shunned him. He began to cry; his tears fell into the water and disturbed the image. As he saw it depart, he screamed out for the image to stop leaving him. This went on and on for quite a long time. By standing there so long, Narcissus lost his color, vigor, and the beauty that had once so charmed the nymph Echo. She kept near him, however, and continued to repeat his screams of sadness. Eventually, Narcissus pined away and died.

The nymphs mourned for him, especially the water nymphs. The nymphs prepared a funeral pile and would have burned the body, but it was nowhere to be found. All that was left in the place where Narcissus stood, was a flower, purple within, and surrounded with white leaves, which now holds the name and preserves the memory of Narcissus. This tale of course is where we derived the word Narcissist which basically means someone that is full of himself.

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